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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes a study of Americans' attitudes toward teaching, educational opportunity, and school reform. Surveys of 2,501 adults nationwide indicate that Americans unequivocally support the guarantee of free public education and consider improvement in fundamental areas of student behavior and academic performance essential. Greater percentages of the public in this survey believe that all students are capable of learning demanding academic material and that hard work pays off in higher achievement. A declining percentage of Americans believe that educational opportunities are shared equally by minorities and the poor. Americans consider ensuring a well-qualified teacher in every public school classroom, along with safe schools and parent involvement, the most important element in lifting student achievement. Most Americans agree on what qualified teachers mean to them, with the most important elements being classroom management skills, deep subject matter knowledge, and understanding of how to teach that subject and how children learn. The public believes that pairing new teachers with proven veterans is a good solution to teacher recruitment and quality challenges. They support government action to ensure a larger pool of qualified teachers, particularly for disadvantaged students. The teacher survey is appended. (SM)

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The Essential Profession

American Education at the Crossroads

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A National Survey of Public Attitudes Toward Teaching, Educational Opportunity and School Reform

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Recruiting New Teachers, Inc.

Recruiting New Teachers, Inc. (RNT) is a national nonprofit organization which was formed in 1986 to raise esteem for teaching, expand the pool of prospective teachers, and improve the nation's teacher recruitment and development policies and practices. Based in Belmont, MA, RNT pursues its goals through innovative public service outreach; action-oriented research; local, state and national advocacy; networking; technical assistance; and convening national conferences.

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The Essential Profession

American Education at the Crossroads

by David Haselkorn and Louis Harris

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Executive Summary

In the wake of last fall's historic elections, the conventional wisdom has become the American public is sharply and unusually divided on public policy issues. The thin margin in the presidential contest, the even partisan split in the U.S. Senate, and the narrow gap in the House of Representatives all are lifted up as evidence of this conclusion. As a result, commentators and politicians alike have been searching for issues upon which there may be common ground.

At the same time, a string of public opinion polls have shown that Americans routinely make education a top priority for elected officials. In response, many of the campaigns that resulted in a virtual tie between the two major political parties in Washington and state capitals across the country focused on education reform proposals.

This fall, Recruiting New Teachers, Inc. set out to explore some vital questions raised by the public's interest in improving education. What do Americans actually mean when they place education at the top of the list of concerns for their elected representatives to address? How does the public rate the state of the nation's schools and pick through the array of reform proposals? The results from an extensive public opinion study give the clearest answers to date and challenge the notion of a civic split, at least in terms of education policy choices.

The results of this survey and a companion study conducted by Recruiting New Teachers in 1998 demonstrate that Americans' views toward education have crystallized around a number of fundamental beliefs regarding the importance of public education, teacher quality, and the most promising paths toward school improvement. These core convictions color their assessment of a variety of school improvement measures and reform proposals made in recent political campaigns.

Strong Support for Public School Guarantee

Americans unequivocally support the guarantee of free public education, with 97 percent favoring maintaining it. Americans also see improvement in fundamental areas of student behavior and academic performance. On many counts, the number of people critical of the so-called failures of the schools has dropped dramatically.

Greater percentages of the public today believe that all children are capable of learning demanding academic material and that hard work pays off in higher academic achievement. But a declining percentage of Americans believes that educational opportunities are shared equally by minorities and the poor. In fact, fewer than two in 10 people now agree strongly that children in poor neighborhoods have the same educational opportunities as those in more affluent ones.

Correcting this imbalance is one of the reasons education emerges as a high domestic priority in this as well as other national surveys. But the

in-depth responses of the current poll fill in the picture considerably in terms of what the public wants to see happen as a result of making education a top priority.

Improving Teaching: The First and Best Reform

Americans rate ensuring a well-qualified teacher in every public school classroom—along with safe schools and involved parents—as the most important ingredient in lifting student achievement.

These responses follow the pattern which emerged in the 1998 survey, leaving little doubt that public opinion is well established on the question. In this regard, putting a qualified teacher in every public school classroom outpolls every other strategy for school reform tested by commanding majorities, including charter schools, vouchers, high-stakes tests, establishing a system of academic standards, ending social promotion, reducing class size, providing access to computers in schools, and more.

For example, roughly eight in 10 Americans favor doing what it takes to ensure a qualified teacher in every classroom over offering parents vouchers for private school tuition or spending to increase the number of independent "charter" schools as the best way to make our schools what they ought to be. Similarly, 89 percent of Americans view ensuring a well-qualified teacher in every classroom as an important measure for lifting student achievement, compared to only 28 percent of the public who view promoting and graduating students solely based on standardized tests as the answer.

Teacher Quality: A Clear Consensus and a Growing Concern

Forceful majorities of Americans agree on what "a qualified teacher" means to them. Qualifications such as classroom management skill, deep knowledge of subject matter, and an understanding of both how to teach that subject and how children learn cluster at the top of the public's list. Formal teacher education is deemed important, too, as is a commitment to staying current in their teaching field(s). But Americans are increasingly concerned that the quality of the current teaching force does not measure up to what children need and what the nation's education goals demand.

Fewer than a quarter believe that their local school district always hires fully qualified teachers, and fewer than a third believe that their state's current teacher licensing requirements ensure that teachers really know how to teach. Fewer than two in 10 say that teachers in their own community are highly qualified and more than a third believe teachers nationally are only minimally qualified or unqualified. Among parents of schoolchildren, only six in 10 say their children's teachers are very knowledgeable about the subjects they teach and know a lot about how to help their children learn. An even more widely perceived teacher quality gap exists among low-income and minority groups.

Americans feel strongly that parents have a right to know the qualifications of those who teach their children. Nearly eight in 10 say parents should receive specific information about their qualifications at the beginning of the school year. More than eight in 10

Americans want incompetent teachers removed from the classroom if they fail to measure up after having been provided training and opportunities to improve. And although nearly six in 10 (58%) Americans believe teacher unions support high standards for teachers, a higher 72 percent agree that too often teacher unions stand in the way of removing incompetent ones.

An Array of Solutions Supported

The public is equally clear when it comes to solutions to the nation's teacher recruitment and quality challenges. Receiving near-unanimous support are special efforts to pair new teachers with proven veterans—so-called induction programs. Nearly nine in 10 would eliminate the practice of hiring unqualified teachers. In this regard, three-quarters of the American public oppose allowing people with bachelor's degrees to become teachers without requiring preparation in the field of education.

Americans support stronger government action to ensure a larger pool of qualified teachers, particularly in schools serving disadvantaged children. More than seven in 10 favor forgiving student loans for teachers in those schools and offering teachers tax credits and/or signing bonuses. Nearly nine in 10 support the establishment of a national teacher job bank and clearinghouse to help states and districts look nationwide for qualified teachers. Teaching is still viewed, far and away, as the profession of greatest benefit to society. It outpaces its closest rival, medicine, by nearly three to one among eight fields tested in the poll. Moreover, the public also understands the interplay between teacher salaries, career choice, and quality teaching. Nearly nine in 10 favor raising teacher salaries; eight in 10 would pay an extra $10 a year in taxes to help ensure teachers were paid as well as those with comparable education credentials and length of experience in other fields.

Summing Up

The American people still view public education as the pathway to the American dream. Far from having given up on its promise, the public is more determined than ever to achieve it.

Americans also understand there is much that needs improving in public education today. However, when it comes to public school reform, nothing less than a new unifying pivot has emerged: the public believes teacher quality is the heart of the matter.

This study shows unequivocally that Americans are saying fix teaching first. Raise standards in the profession. Pay teachers more. Hold teachers accountable and remove those who fail to make the grade. Treat teaching as the honored and respected profession it must become if the promise of public education is to be achieved. And most of all ensure that all children, particularly low-income and minority school children, are taught by fully qualified teachers in every subject and every classroom every year.

About This Study

This report summarizes the findings of a comprehensive study designed to gauge Americans' attitudes about teaching, educational opportunity, and school reform. In all, cross-sections of 2,501 adults were surveyed. A cross-section of 1,500 adults nationwide was surveyed in late August and early September 2000, while a cross-section of 1,001 adults was surveyed in California in September 2000. Both studies employed probability methodologies that ensured that each household in the universe sampled had an equal chance of being represented in the final sample. Callbacks were made to attempt to realize completion of the random sample as drawn. The sampling error for the study is plus or minus 2% in 95 out of 100 cases.

The survey questionnaire instrument was designed by Louis Harris and David Haselkorn. Dr. Mildred Hudson, CEO of Recruiting New Teachers, Inc (RNT); Dr. Jacqueline Jordan Irvine, Candler Professor of Urban Education, Emory University; Dr. Joan Baratz Snowden, Deputy Director for Educational Issues, American Federation of Teachers; Dr. Harvey Hunt and Margaret Gaston of the Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning; Dr. Susan Zelman, Commissioner of Education, Ohio; and RNT staff members all provided helpful comment and critique during the study design and questionnaire phases.

The interviewing, sample preparation, and computer processing of the data were conducted by an independent national firm, The Peter Harris Research Group.

Louis Harris worked closely with the Peter Harris organization on the execution of the survey design in the field. All of the original computer runs are available upon request, along with annotated copies of the questionnaires used.

The study was sponsored by the Ford Foundation and Washington Mutual.

Introduction

In 1998, Recruiting New Teachers (RNT) published *The Essential Profession: A National Survey of Public Attitudes Toward Teaching, Educational Opportunity and School Reform*. Set against a backdrop of rising public interest in education, *The Essential Profession* documented the public's strong support for a quality teacher agenda. By commanding majorities, the survey showed Americans supported doing what it takes to put a qualified teacher in every classroom as the most effective strategy for making schools what they ought to be.

With education currently the top public policy concern of the American people, *The Essential Profession: American Education at the Crossroads* establishes new benchmarks and documents important trend lines in public attitudes towards teaching, school reform, and educational opportunity. The new survey explicitly gauges public support for a range of strategies currently most prominent on the school reform radar screen: tougher student standards, ending social promotion, class size reduction, high-stakes tests, vouchers, charter schools, and cutting off funding for failing schools, among others. In addition, as school districts and states across the country seek to cope with growing shortages of qualified teachers, the survey probes in depth the public's views on a variety of strategies designed to address teacher supply and demand and teacher quality, as well as the conditions, compensation, and status of teaching as a profession.

The findings provide an exceptionally detailed picture of where the public stands on all these critical issues, and more. In so doing, the survey may also help pinpoint the potential political impact of key issues, showing which strategies have traction with the American people and which are non-starters. Some of the results may seem predictable, but there is also much that cuts against the grain of conventional political wisdom. Overall, this new report provides an unparalleled road map for public engagement that can serve as a guide for those vested with responsibility for educational policy nationally, as well as for school reform advocates across the political and policy spectrum. There is probably something in the survey that will consternate proponents on all sides of the school reform debate. But, at the same time, this survey documents clearly what the public wants when it gives education its top priority.

Overview of the Findings

The Essential Profession: American Education at the Crossroads documents an emerging national consensus about the value of public education and the importance of teacher quality in school reform. At a time when the American people are according an unprecedented priority to education, these data show that the public:

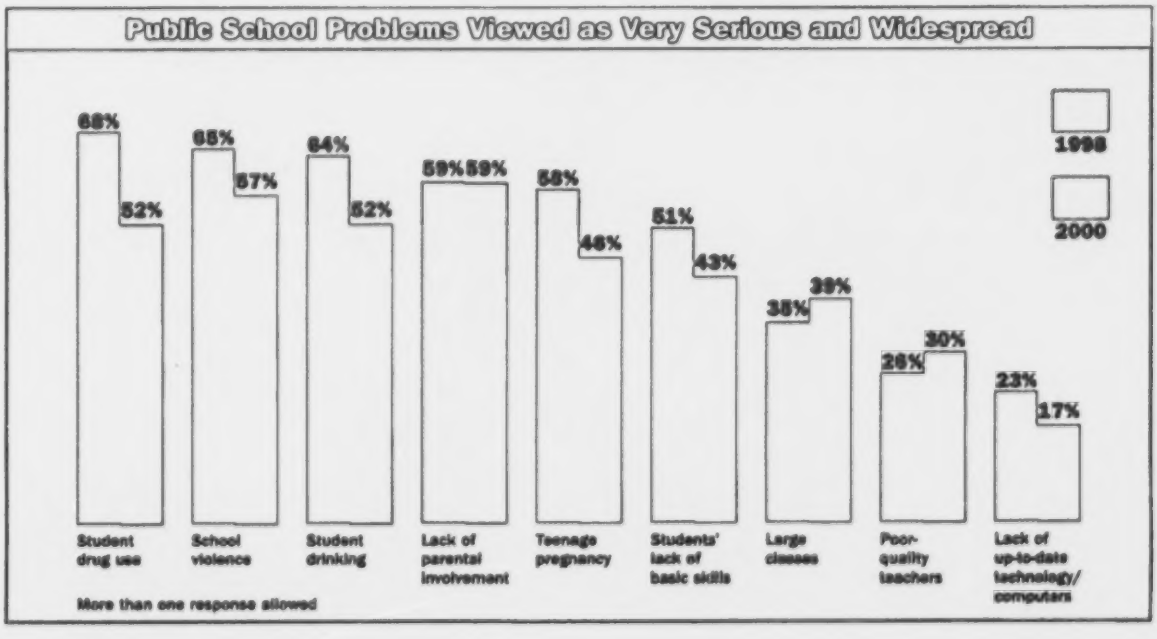
- Understands the central role that quality teaching plays in school improvement and lifting student achievement.
- Appreciates the breadth of complex knowledge and skills fully qualified teachers require.
- Values and supports providing a free public education for all the nation's children.
- Believes that most children can master demanding academic subjects and that academic success is primarily determined by effort rather than natural ability.
- Appreciates that a variety of opportunities to learn are "very important" to lifting student achievement, including high-quality instructional materials, challenging curricula, school buildings and facilities in good condition, smaller class sizes, greater parental involvement, effective principals, access to computers, and keeping schools safe from violence.
- Supports greater investments in teacher recruitment, mentoring and induction of new teachers, as well as ongoing professional development for veteran teachers.
- Views ongoing professional development for veteran teachers as essential to raising student achievement.
- Supports higher salaries for teachers and would pay more in taxes to provide them.
- Recognizes the benefits teachers provide society, outpacing all other professions tested by nearly 3:1.
- Accords teaching a potentially higher attractiveness as a prospective career than is often assumed.
- Understands and supports the need to spend more money to ensure qualified teachers, particularly for low-income and minority school children.
- Rejects quick fixes that propel unprepared individuals into the classroom as teachers.
- Wants stronger standards for teachers.
- Acknowledges the importance of teacher education.
- Sees potential benefits in both vouchers and charter schools but is concerned they will erode the capacity of existing public schools to serve the children who remain there.
- Views ensuring a qualified teacher in every classroom as a more powerful reform strategy than vouchers, charter schools, or high-stakes tests.

Key Findings

A Decline in Perceived Barriers to Quality Education

In 1998, student behavioral issues (school violence, student drug use, drinking, and teen pregnancy) topped the list of detrimental problems the public viewed as "very serious and widespread" in the nation's public schools. In this most recent survey, the concern about these issues has declined. An exception is lack of parental involvement, which leads the list of nine problems surveyed, viewed by 59% of the public as "very serious and widespread," virtually unchanged from levels two years ago. In most other key areas, concern has dropped significantly.

For example, in 1998 nearly 7 in 10 Americans (68%) viewed the problem of student drug use as "very serious and widespread." Today, only 52% do—a drop of 16 points. Similarly, while nearly two-thirds of the American public (64%) viewed the problem of student drinking as "very serious and widespread" in 1998, today only slightly more than half (52%) do—a drop of 12 points. The problem of teenage pregnancy has comparably declined in the public's estimation ("very serious and widespread," 1998: 58%; 2000: 46%—a drop of 12 points). The percentage of Americans who view students' lack of basic skills as a "very serious and widespread" problem has gone down as well (1998: 51%; 2000: 43%—a decline of 8 points).



These results expose a trend that is sharply at odds with prevailing political rhetoric portraying confidence in public education at an all-time low. To the contrary, these data reveal something of a turnaround in confidence levels, suggesting that the public senses that the public schools are showing real improvement for the first time in many years. In turn, this strongly suggests the public wants to right the wrongs in public schools, not write them off.

Only 30% of Americans view the problem of poor-quality teaching as "very serious and widespread," rising slightly from 26% in 1998, but within the sample's margin of error. However, 46% of blacks, and 39% of Latinos, view the problem of poor-quality teaching that seriously, perhaps reflecting the higher percentage of unqualified teachers that teach in their communities' schools. Many other results point up sharp differences among key subgroups. An illustration: just 45% of men view the problem of student drinking as "very serious and widespread," compared to 59% of women. Other notable differences are occasionally found between those with direct experience in the classroom (current and former teachers) and the general public. For example, teachers currently in the classroom are the group least likely to view students' lack of basic skills as a "very serious and widespread" problem (34% vs. 43% of the general public).

Qualified Teachers Seen as Key to Lifting Student Achievement

In 1998, the American people reacted sharply and decisively when asked about the importance of teacher quality in raising student educational achievement. In fall 2000, this bedrock conviction remained strong and solid. When rating measures that can make a difference in promoting student achievement in public elementary and secondary schools, 89% of Americans say that "ensuring a well-qualified teacher in every classroom" is "very important," with another 10% saying it is "somewhat important," making for a virtually unanimous majority.

Not surprisingly, 8 out of 10 Americans (80%) agree strongly that "we should ensure that all children, including those who are economically disadvantaged, have teachers who are fully qualified, even if that means spending more money to achieve." A similar margin say America must give a high national priority to recruiting and preparing such teachers (81%).[1] To make sure this happens, 77% of all Americans believe that "we must give a high national priority to developing the professional skills and knowledge of teachers throughout their careers," to help their students learn demanding subjects. By a 61% to 36% majority, Americans also favor lengthening the school year by two weeks to allow more time for teacher planning.

[1] An even higher 89% of the nation's blacks hold this view.

Americans understand that fully qualified teachers are key to lifting student achievement. They believe that all children deserve to have such teachers as virtually a fundamental right, one that is particularly important for economically disadvantaged children who are routinely denied this right today. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future notes that, in 1994, 27% of all new entrants to teaching had no license or a substandard license in the field they were hired to teach, and a disproportionate number of these unqualified teachers end up in the classrooms of our most disadvantaged students.[2] Indeed, in central city schools with the highest minority enrollments, students have less than a 50% chance of getting a math or science teacher with a degree and a license in the field they teach.[3] Americans know that the promise of public education can never be fulfilled against such odds. Reversing these odds will require making the quality teacher challenge a high national priority.

The link between raised expectations for students and higher standards for their teachers runs as a leitmotif throughout the survey. Three-fourths of the American public believe that teacher licensing standards should be tied more closely with standards for student performance. A greater 90% of Latinos agree with this view, as well as a nearly as high 88% of Americans with the lowest family incomes. On the other hand, only 46% of current teachers agree with this proposition. At the same time, 87% of the public believe that most children are capable of learning demanding academic subject matter, *up 17 points from 70% two years ago*. By nearly a 7:1 majority, Americans believe that student academic performance is more strongly influenced by hard work than natural ability (70% versus 12%), a margin that has grown significantly from a comparable 62% vs. 19% in 1998.

The Teacher Quality Gap

The teacher quality gap can be seen in particularly sharp relief in California. The California Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning estimates that 11.5% of California's nearly 300,000 teachers hold emergency permits. Moreover, data on licensure reflect clear disparities in the distribution of unqualified and underqualified teachers among the state's schools.

For example, almost one in four schools statewide are staffed by 20% or more underqualified teachers. Schools with the highest minority student enrollment have more than six times the percentage of underqualified teachers as schools with the lowest number of minority students. High-poverty schools have nearly four times the percentage of underqualified teachers as schools with the lowest student poverty levels, the Center's data show.[4]

[2] Darling-Hammond, Linda. (2000). *Solving the Dilemmas of Teacher Supply, Demand, and Standards: How We Can Ensure a Competent, Caring, and Qualified Teacher for Every Child.* New York: National Commission on Teaching and America's Future.

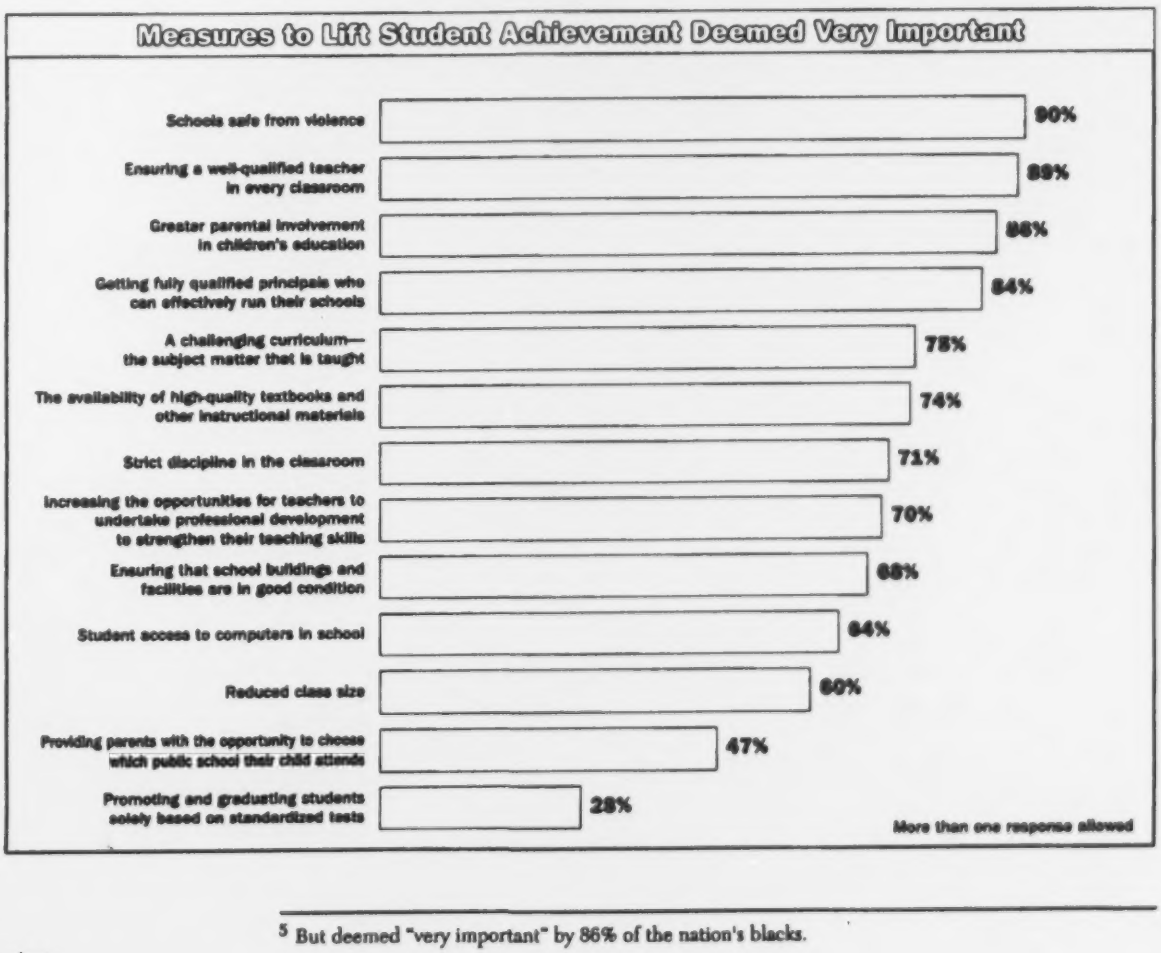
[3] Darling-Hammond, Linda. (1997). *Doing What Matters Most: Investing in Quality Teaching.* New York: National Commission on Teaching and America's Future.

[4] Shields, Patrick M., Esch, Camille E., Humphrey, Daniel C., Riehl, Lori M., Tiffany-Morales, Juliet D., & Young, Viki M. (Eds.) (2000). *The Status of the Teaching Profession 2000: An Update to the Teaching and California's Future Task Force.* Santa Cruz, CA: The Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning.

It is clear that Americans place a high priority on improving student educational achievement and believe that most children are capable of learning demanding academic subject matter. They see teacher quality as the indispensable integer in the school reform equation. When asked how important they felt a highly qualified teacher is to helping a child achieve his or her full learning potential, 87% of the American people said that it was either "the most important" or a "very important" element in education.

Additional Factors Seen As Very Important to Student Success

Participants in the poll were asked to assess the importance of a wide variety of measures for lifting student achievement. Among the highest: making schools safe from violence (90%), ensuring a well-qualified teacher in every classroom (89%), greater parental involvement in children's education (86%), and getting fully qualified principals who can effectively run their schools (84%). Also rated highly were a challenging curriculum—the subject matter that is taught (75%),[5]


Measures to Lift Student Achievement Deemed Very Important
Schools safe from violence
90%
Ensuring a well-qualified teacher in every classroom
89%
Greater parental involvement in children's education
86%
Getting fully qualified principals who can effectively run their schools
84%
A challenging curriculum—the subject matter that is taught
75%
The availability of high-quality textbooks and other instructional materials
74%
Strict discipline in the classroom
71%
Increasing the opportunities for teachers to undertake professional development to strengthen their teaching skills
70%
Ensuring that school buildings and facilities are in good condition
68%
Student access to computers in school
64%
Reduced class size
60%
Providing parents with the opportunity to choose which public school their child attends
47%
Promoting and graduating students solely based on standardized tests
28%
More than one response allowed

[5] But deemed "very important" by 86% of the nation's blacks.

the availability of high-quality textbooks and other instructional materials (74%), maintaining strict discipline in the classroom (71%), and increasing opportunities for teachers to undertake professional development to strengthen their teaching skills (70%).

Below the 70% level were: ensuring that school buildings and facilities are in good condition (68%), student access to computers in school (64%), and reducing class size (60%). However, blacks and Latinos rated many of these latter measures more highly.

Distinctly at the bottom of the list came two nostrums that have been widely promoted by politicians of late: promoting and graduating students solely based on standardized tests (28%), and providing parents with the opportunity to choose which public school their child attends (47%).

In the recent election campaign, candidates gave significant attention to keeping violence in check in the schools (the aftermath of Columbine and other school shootings) and having fully qualified teachers—although how to achieve these ends was not always spelled out. The even greater attention that candidates gave to standardized tests as the basis for promotion, to reducing class size, and to giving parents greater choice over schools their children might attend reveals major gaps between the importance politicians accord these issues and what parents and non-parents alike cite as their real priorities.

America's Choice: Fix Teaching First

Over the last decade, many of the school reform efforts of states and school districts have focused on raising academic standards and developing more rigorous tests of student achievement in core academic subjects. In both 1998 and 2000, we asked the public to tell us whether they thought either of these strategies, or teacher quality, had the greatest influence on student learning (see chart below).

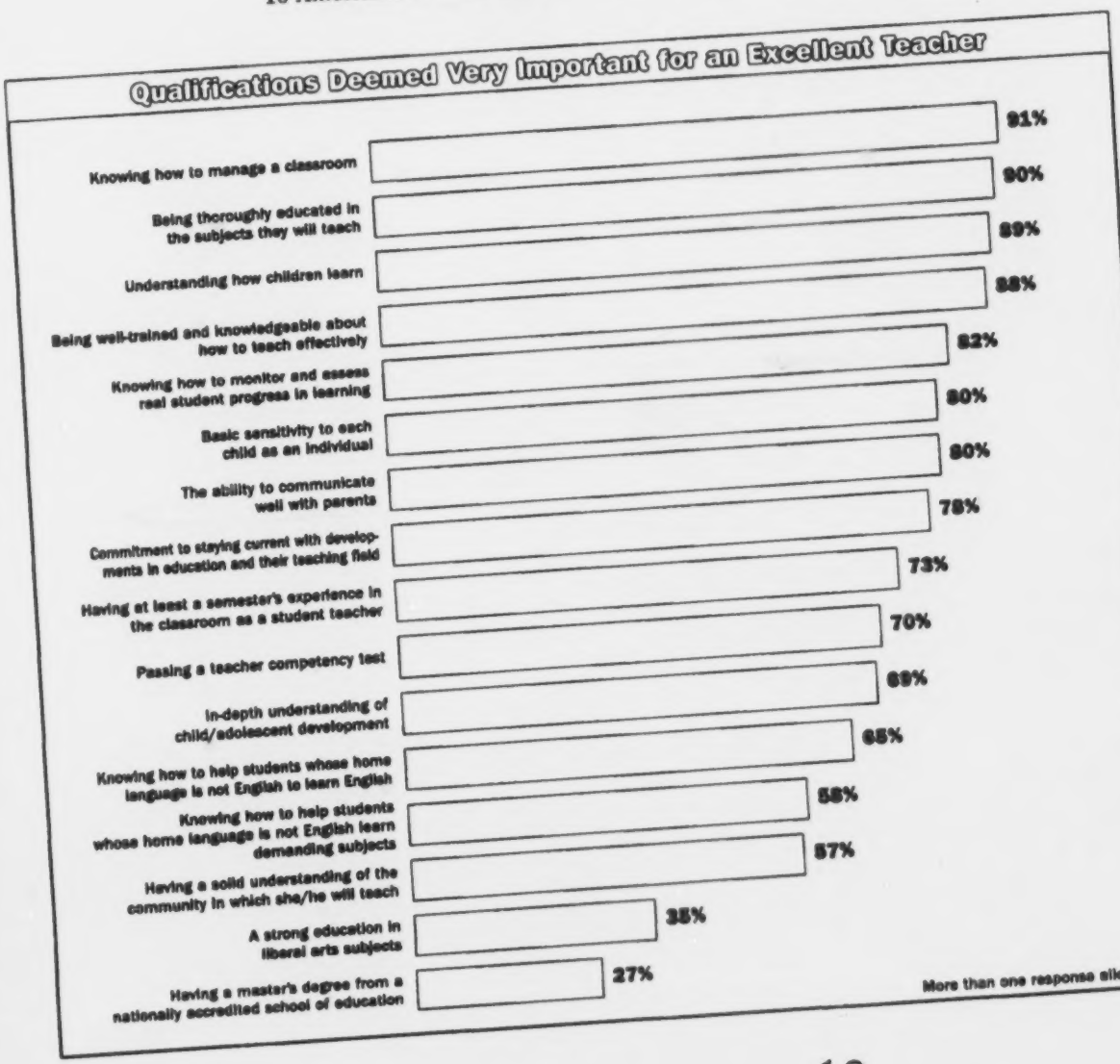
Greatest Influence on Learning

	1998	2000
The quality of their teachers	55%	60%
Establishing a system of academic standards required to be met by all students	30%	28%
Requiring achievement tests in core academic subjects	14%	11%
Not sure	1%	1%

The gain for the quality teacher choice on this measure illustrates the preceding observation in even sharper relief. Despite the turned-up volume on high-stakes testing and higher student standards in the dialogue during the recent election, the public believes that investing in better teachers beats other strategies decisively.

Teacher Qualifications Americans Believe Matter Most

Americans understand that a qualified teacher is the most important element in quality education. But they are far from satisfied with current standards in the profession and have strong opinions about what qualifications an excellent teacher must have. The qualifications rated "very important" by 8 out of 10 Americans or more include: knowing how to manage a classroom (91%); being thoroughly educated in the subjects they will teach (90%); understanding how children learn (89%); being well-trained and knowledgeable about how to teach effectively (88%); knowing how to monitor and assess student progress and learning (82%); basic sensitivity to each child as an individual (80%); and the ability to communicate well with parents (80%). At 78%, "a commitment to staying current with develop-


Qualifications Deemed Very Important for an Excellent Teacher
Knowing how to manage a classroom
91%
Being thoroughly educated in the subjects they will teach
90%
Understanding how children learn
89%
Being well-trained and knowledgeable about how to teach effectively
88%
Knowing how to monitor and assess real student progress in learning
82%
Basic sensitivity to each child as an individual
80%
The ability to communicate well with parents
80%
Commitment to staying current with developments in education and their teaching field
78%
Having at least a semester's experience in the classroom as a student teacher
73%
Passing a teacher competency test
70%
In-depth understanding of child/adolescent development
69%
Knowing how to help students whose home language is not English to learn English
65%
Knowing how to help students whose home language is not English learn demanding subjects
58%
Having a solid understanding of the community in which she/he will teach
57%
A strong education in liberal arts subjects
35%
Having a master's degree from a nationally accredited school of education
27%
More than one response allowed

ments in education and their teaching field" rated nearly as high.

Critics of teacher education frequently denigrate many of these qualifications as being less important than a solid liberal arts preparation. Yet having a strong liberal arts education was deemed very important by only 35% of the American people. Similarly, possessing a master's degree from a nationally accredited school of education was seen as very important by only a quarter of the American people (27%), a decline of 12% since 1998.

The degree to which the qualifications Americans value most in their teachers mirror the five core propositions for accomplished teaching advanced by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards[6] is significant:

- **Teachers are committed to students and their learning.**
- **Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach the subjects to students.**
- **Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.**
- **Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.**
- **Teachers are members of learning communities.**

In many important respects, the emerging national consensus on quality teaching transcends differences in lay and professional opinion. Yet the public's weaker support for teachers having strong liberal arts preparation or a master's degree from a nationally accredited school of education demonstrates that proponents of teacher preparation reforms that prominently highlight such qualifications clearly have a further case to make if they want the public to fully support those strategies.

Teacher Qualifications By the Numbers

Percent of secondary school teachers with an academic degree in their teaching field:[7]	**63%**
States requiring an academic major or minor in teaching field for high school teachers:[8] (23 require an academic major)	**39**
States requiring teacher competency tests:[9]	
Basic skills:	**37**
Subject matter:	**29**
Subject-specific pedagogy:	**24**
States with alternative certification programs:[10]	**44**

How the Public Grades Teachers Today

It is clear that Americans expect a great deal from their teachers. But are they satisfied with what they are getting? The answers are mixed.

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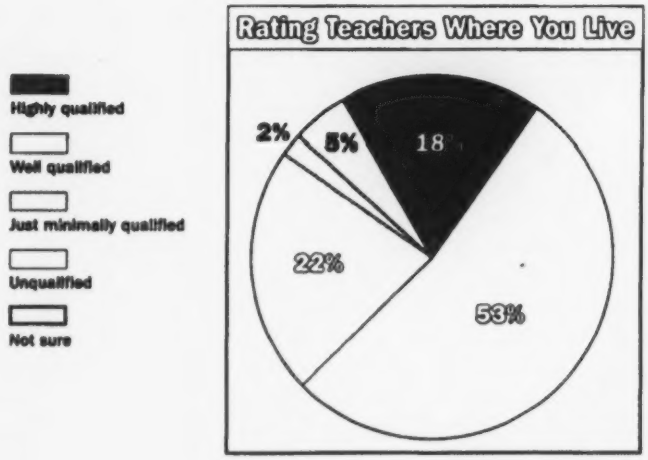
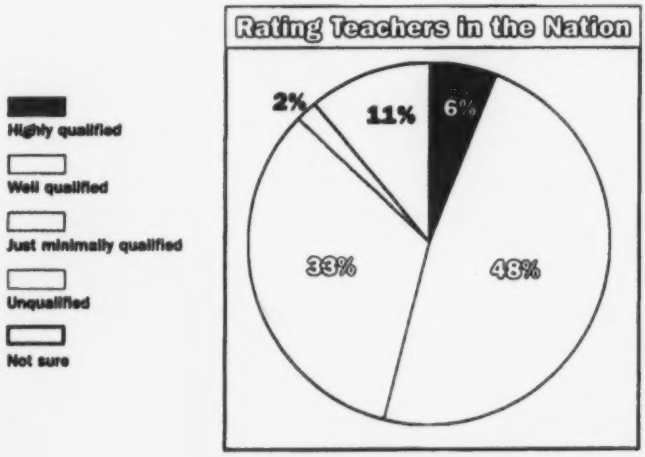
[6] A nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that has established rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know, and which awards National Board Certification to teachers who successfully complete a complex series of assessments.

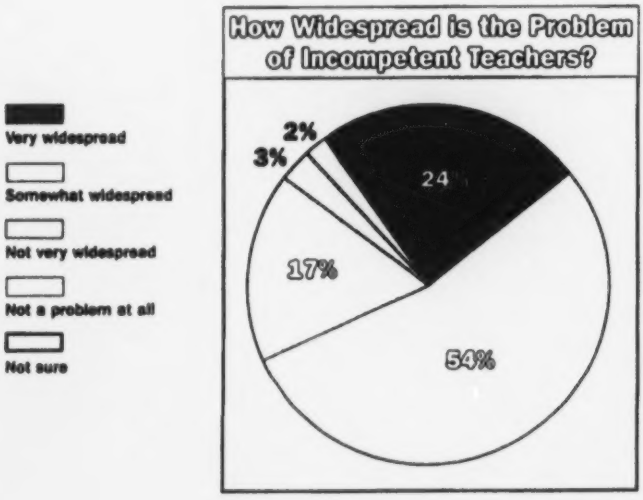
[7] *Education Week*. (2001). *Quality Counts 2001: A Better Balance*. Washington, DC: Editorial Projects in Education, pp. 96-97.

[8,9] IBID

[10] Office of the Undersecretary, Postsecondary, Adult, and Vocational Education Division. (2000). *Literature Review on Teacher Recruitment Programs*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.







A 71% majority believe that the teachers in their communities are highly qualified or well qualified. However, at the other end of the spectrum, 24% believe that the teachers in public schools where they live are either just minimally qualified or unqualified. When asked to rate most teachers in the nation, the public shows an even deeper degree of concern, with 35% rating the nation's teachers as just minimally qualified or unqualified. Nearly a quarter (24%) of the public believe that the problem of incompetent teachers in public schools today is "very widespread" (another 54% believe that it is "somewhat widespread"). However, nearly a third of the nation's Latinos and fully a third of the nation's blacks view the problem of incompetent teachers as being "very widespread."

These concerns, in turn, lead 8 in 10 Americans to the view that parents should receive specific information regarding the qualifications of their child's teacher(s) at the beginning of the school year. Incompetent teachers, the public believes, should be dealt with fairly, but firmly: 75% of the public believe that teachers found to be incompetent should be given more training and opportunities to improve rather than summarily removed (21%). However, 85% of the public feel that teachers provided additional training and development who continue to miss the mark should be removed.

The public's recognition of the importance of qualified teachers has an important corollary: the firm conviction that unqualified teachers can no longer be tolerated and that the practice of hiring unqualified teachers is indefensible.

How the Public Assesses Policies and the Institutions That Shape Teaching

Responses to a number of other policies and practices that affect the teaching profession were somewhat more equivocal. For example, while 6 out of 10 Americans agree that current teacher licensing standards in their state guarantee that teachers really know how to teach, less than a third (31%) agree strongly that they do. Even fewer Americans (57%) agree that their local school district always hires fully qualified teachers.[11] Americans agree that most colleges and universities that prepare teachers are doing a good job (76%). Only a spare 2% agree strongly that teacher education is a waste of time. Indeed, a high 8 in 10 strongly disagree with that assertion.

The public's attitudes toward the teacher unions are more ambivalent. Teacher unions receive lukewarm endorsement by the public, despite the fact that a number of the positions they advocate are supported. For example, while 58% of the public agree that "teacher unions support setting high standards for teachers," only a quarter of survey respondents agree strongly that they do. And a higher 72% agree that, "Too often, teacher unions stand in the way of removing incompetent teachers," while only a slight majority (51%) deem teacher unions a major, positive force for improving education.

Unions and Peer Review

Imagine a local teachers' union that was responsible for removing an average of 9.4% of new teachers from the schools over the past 10 years (1988-1998),[12] deeming that these individuals were unfit to be classroom teachers. This is just what the Toledo Public School system, in collaboration with the local affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers, has done in a plan in operation since 1981, known as "The Intern Program." The program assigns all new teachers a "teacher mentor," who is responsible for determining, along with a Board of Review composed of teachers and administrators, whether an individual is fit to serve in the classroom. Periodic evaluations—conducted by other teachers—continue throughout a teacher's tenure in the district.

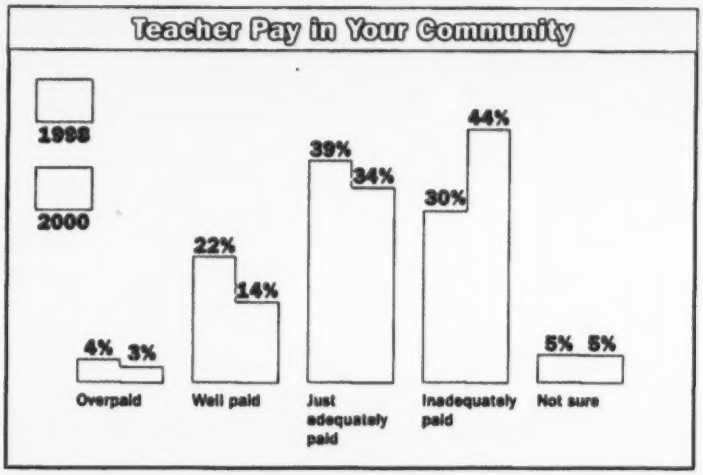
Similar initiatives, all of which are written into the standard teacher contract of these school systems, have been implemented in a few other large districts, including Cincinnati, Seattle, Cambridge (MA), and Rochester (NY). The states of Kansas and California are currently considering such a plan on a statewide basis.

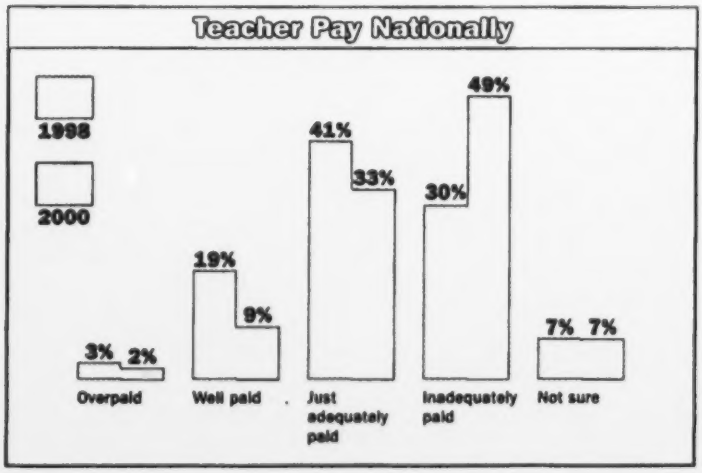
Money Matters: The Issue of Teacher Pay

Nine in 10 (89%) Americans agree that truly accomplished master teachers should be recognized and rewarded with higher pay, as is the current practice (with teacher union support) in many states for teachers who have obtained National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certification. A similar percentage agree that "teachers should be paid according to what they know and how well they perform on the job," compared to only 36% who believe that "teachers should be paid according to

[11] A decline of 17 points since 1998.

[12] Dal Lawrence, Toledo Federation of Teachers.





how well their students perform on standardized tests of academic achievement."

But when it comes to the bottom line on teacher pay, the public has few illusions about the adequacy of monetary rewards available to teachers today. A plurality of Americans (44%) believe that teachers in their communities are inadequately paid. Another 34% think their local teachers are just adequately paid. Fewer than 1 in 5 Americans believe that local teachers are well paid (14%) or overpaid (3%). Nationally, the assessment is even less sanguine, with 81% believing that teachers are inadequately paid (49%)[13] or just adequately paid (33%). Nearly 9 in 10 Americans favor raising teacher salaries (see below). And 83% of the American public would be willing to pay $10 more in taxes to help equalize the salaries between teachers and members of other professions with similar levels of education.

Meeting the Recruitment Challenge: Higher Standards Not Shortcuts

When it comes to meeting America's teacher recruitment challenges, the public strongly supports a broad set of recruitment measures, many of which have been adopted by states, districts, and the federal government. At the same time, support for a few of the shortcuts to teaching adopted in some regions is strikingly absent.

[13] A 19-point increase over the 30% of Americans who thought that teachers in the U.S. were inadequately paid in 1998.

Americans favor:

- Establishing special programs for new teachers, in which able, veteran teachers would serve as mentors to newly hired teachers (95%);
- Making it easier for teachers to transfer pension benefits and salary credit for experience when changing jobs between districts and states (89%);
- Raising teacher salaries (88%);[14]
- Eliminating the practice of hiring unqualified teachers (88%);
- Attracting more people currently working in other careers into teacher preparation (83%);
- Offering signing bonuses to qualified teachers who commit to teaching in high-need areas (82%);
- Strengthening state requirements for becoming a teacher (76%);
- Providing tax credits for teachers who work in high-poverty areas (77%);
- Providing prospective teachers who commit to teaching in disadvantaged schools forgivable loans (74%).

However, 75% of the American public oppose allowing people with bachelor's degrees to become teachers without requiring preparation in the field of education. And 82% oppose lowering state requirements for the training needed to become a licensed teacher—opinions in sharp contrast to some of the crisis-driven actions of policymakers and school district officials undertaken to meet growing teacher shortages. A better solution to the problem: establishing a central clearinghouse where people interested in teaching can find jobs anywhere in the country and where school districts can search nationwide to find qualified teachers—a strategy the public strongly favors by a 9:1 majority (89% vs. 9%).

Teaching Still Viewed as the "Essential Profession"

The teacher recruitment challenge the nation faces is daunting. And the public perceives many problems with standards, conditions, salaries, and the status of the profession. Despite these concerns, Americans still have a high regard for the contributions teachers make to society. Indeed, teaching once again ranks at the top when Americans are asked to choose which profession provides the most benefit to society: teacher (62%); doctor (22%); nurse (3%); business person (3%); public official (2%); lawyer (2%); journalist (1%); accountant (1%).

The attractive power of teaching as a career choice remains remarkably high as well, despite all the problems the public views besetting the profession. At 35%, teaching is second only to the choice of doctor (45%) as the career individuals would recommend to a member of their family, despite the lopsided salary advantages enjoyed by physicians. In this regard, if teachers were guaranteed a salary of $60,000 a year, more than 8 in 10 Americans (82%) say they would recommend teaching as a career choice to a member of their family. Indeed, 6 in 10

[14] A 10-point increase in support for this measure since 1998.

Profession with Most Benefit to Society	
Teacher	62%
Doctor (physician)	22%
Nurse	3%
Business person	3%
Lawyer	2%
Public official	2%
Accountant	1%
Journalist	1%
None of them	1%
Not sure	3%

Career Would Recommend Most Highly to a Family Member	
Doctor (physician)	45%
Teacher	35%
Business person	18%
Lawyer	15%
Nurse	12%
Accountant	7%
Journalist	5%
Public official	5%
None of them	3%
Not sure	5%

More than one response allowed

Americans (61%) would consider a teaching career themselves at these salary levels. Money does matter. The intrinsic call to teaching still attracts. But a career in teaching should not have to be pursued as a philanthropic act.

It is clear from these data that the teacher recruitment and quality challenges facing the nation are not insuperable. Rather, they await bolder action by policymakers to raise standards, salaries, and conditions simultaneously and to put into place the kinds of recruitment programs and human resource supports that are routinely found in other fields. Fundamentally, what's needed is the public will to do so.

Public Education at the Crossroads: Putting Alternatives to the Test

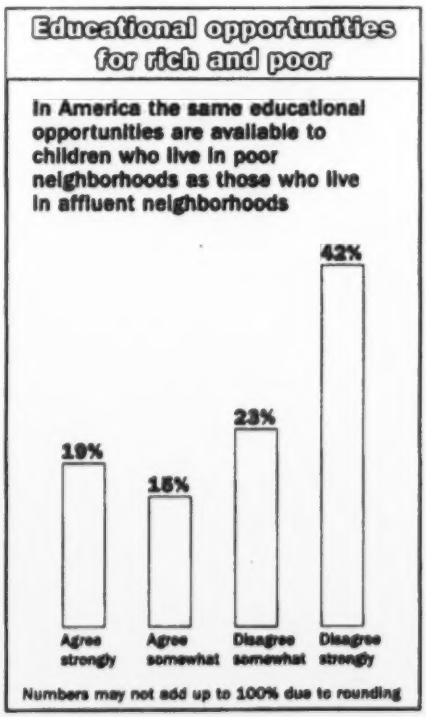
In the final section of the survey we tested the public's support for its schools and approval of a variety of proposals for aiding them that were put forward during the recent election season. We also sought the public's views in depth on the merits of charter schools and vouchers and their potential for spurring widespread reform and improvement in American education. Finally, we asked whom the public thought had the real power to improve education, and how they would evaluate their performance toward this goal. Taken together, their answers are key to understanding the public will that is available to be tapped for school reform, and the leadership that will be required to do so.

Quality Public Education: An Inviolable Right for All, A Reality for Only Some

First, support for public education remains a bedrock belief among the American public, with 97% of Americans in favor of maintaining the guarantee of a free public education for every child. However, only 28% of the public strongly agree that the same educational opportunities are available to minority and non-minority children alike in this nation, a telling statistic that is 6% lower than the comparable response in 1998. Similarly, only 19% agree strongly that the same educational opportunities are available to children who live in poor neighborhoods as those who live in affluent ones.

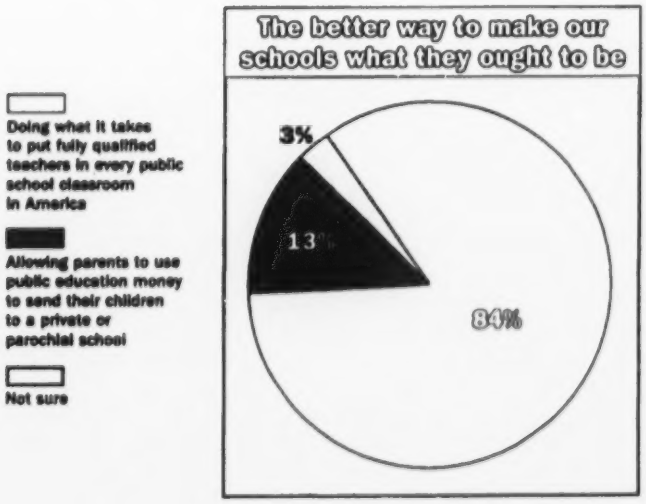
The reality implicit in these data is what lead us to say that American education is indeed at a crossroads. The American people's unshakable commitment to public education is directly at odds with the growing disparities the public perceives between the education that rich and poor children and minority and non-minority children receive in the United States. Seen most starkly here, this fundamental affront to core American values can also be glimpsed beneath the surface of many survey responses. In particular, where data is broken out by race and/or socioeconomic status, widely perceived differences prevail with regard to the severity of the teacher quality challenge, the problems of school violence, poor student basic skills, the quality of facilities, and more.

The simultaneous commitment to public education and growing acknowledgment of the perceived inequities in its provision may certainly be behind some of the search for alternatives that currently has captured a good deal of political attention. However, Americans give alternatives such as vouchers and charter schools a mixed assessment, at best. Instead, there is powerful agreement and consensus on a better alternative: ensuring a qualified teacher in every classroom.


Educational opportunities for rich and poor
In America the same educational opportunities are available to children who live in poor neighborhoods as those who live in affluent neighborhoods
19%
15%
23%
42%
Agree strongly
Agree somewhat
Disagree somewhat
Disagree strongly
Numbers may not add up to 100% due to rounding

A Surprising Reality Behind Public Attitudes Toward Vouchers

A series of questions was asked about giving parents vouchers that would partially subsidize the cost of their children attending a private, religious, or parochial school of their choice. Sixty-seven percent of the American public think "giving people vouchers would be good because they would give parents choices they don't have now." Six in 10 Americans agree that "giving vouchers to people would be good because some parents feel their children would get a better education in a religious or parochial school." And 59% percent of Americans agree that "giving people vouchers would be good because it would create competitive pressure that would force public schools to improve."


The better way to make our schools what they ought to be
Doing what it takes to put fully qualified teachers in every public school classroom in America
Allowing parents to use public education money to send their children to a private or parochial school
Not sure
3%
13%
84%

By the same token, 60% agree that "giving vouchers to people would be bad because they will take money away from struggling public schools, eroding the quality of education they offer" for the children who remain there. In essence, people like the idea of competition for public education. They approve of greater parental choice and feel that it could lead to better education overall. However, their support sags when confronted with the impact that vouchers might have on the majority of children, should resources be drained from struggling public schools to provide choices for some. More important, when asked to choose which strategy they favored most as the better way to make our schools what they ought to be: (1) allowing parents to use public education money to send their children to private or parochial school, or (2) doing what it takes to put fully qualified teachers in every public school classroom in America, there was simply no contest as to what the public thinks matters most of all.

Even among blacks and Americans from the lowest economic strata, whose support for vouchers is often claimed to be high on this "acid test" question, support for "doing what it takes to put fully qualified teachers in every public school classroom" is overwhelming (93%). Moreover, among voters who rated education a top election issue in November 2000, 87% would favor "doing what it takes to put a qualified teacher in every classroom" vs. just 11% who would favor "allowing parents to use public money to send their children to private or parochial school."

Public Attitudes Toward Charter Schools

A similar zone of consensus is evident in the public's response to charter schools. Two-thirds of the American public think charter schools that would operate as part of the public school system—but would be free from much of the system's regulations and requirements—would be good, because they would give parents who fear their children are getting a poor public school education another choice. Six in 10 of the public think they would be good because they can spur innovation and change in the public schools. However, a closely comparable 58% think that "charter schools would be bad because they can only serve a small number of students, while diverting money and attention badly needed to improve the quality of education for a majority of students."

Charter school proponents often advocate for them on the grounds that charter schools free principals to hire whom they please, unfettered by traditional licensing standards. In so doing they can "shake up the system" by attracting the "best and the brightest" to the profession. But the public is skeptical: only 35% think that "charter schools would be good, because they have fewer restrictions on who they can hire as teachers." More telling, 66% of Americans agree that "charter schools would be bad because they can hire unlicensed teachers who might not be qualified to teach"—a strategy the public strongly rejects when it comes to meeting the teacher recruitment challenge, and dismisses, as well, when it is posed as an alternative to the status quo. And, as with vouchers, in a head-to-head contest between "spending money to establish many more charter schools" or "doing what it takes to get fully qualified teachers in every public school classroom," the quality teacher agenda overwhelming bests the charter school option (90% vs. 7%).

Putting a qualified teacher in every classroom outpolls every other strategy for school reform tested, including charter schools, vouchers, high-stakes tests, establishing a system of academic standards, ending social promotion, reducing class size, providing access to computers in school, and more. A majority of the public may not be opposed to these measures per se, but they see their importance and potential impact as falling far behind a school reform agenda that makes teacher quality its centerpiece and better outcomes for children its goal. What is more, if these alternatives are perceived as draining vital funds from efforts to recruit, train, and develop fully qualified teachers for every public school classroom, they are likely to meet with rejection by the people themselves.

Considering Campaign Promises

Given the importance accorded to education by the public, this poll sought Americans' responses to a variety of additional proposals that have been advanced in currently pending legislation or recently on the campaign trail.

Funding school construction and hiring new teachers both carry the day. Cutting federal funds in states with a long record of low educational performance and closing down failing schools do not meet with public approval.

In the absence of a clear election mandate these data provide important guideposts for policymakers. It is patently apparent that the public does not favor the route of retribution but instead supports the more positive approaches of creating quality school environments and adequately staffing them.

Who The Public Looks To On Reform

Reform proposals are one thing, but to whom does the public look when it comes to implementing them and making needed change occur? To find out, the poll asked participants to identify who they felt had a great deal of power to improve public education. Despite education being primarily a state and local function, the results showed that the public sees the federal government sharing center stage with state and local officials (in rank order): 1. The U.S. Congress (51%); 2. Your state legislature (46%); 3. The president (46%); 4. Your local school board (43%), Your governor (43%).

We next asked how the American public rated the performance of various officials and groups when it comes to improving public education in America. Teachers lead the pack with a 64% rating of "excellent" or "good." Next come school principals at 54%.

Rating Campaign Promises

	Strongly Favor
Reduce federal spending to those states which have had a poor record of academic performance in their public schools for five years or more	15%
Close down failing public schools and give help to students who are in them, such as relocating them in better schools	29%
Increase federal funding for construction of new public schools and modernization of older schools	62%
Increase federal spending to states and school districts to hire new teachers and reduce class size	68%

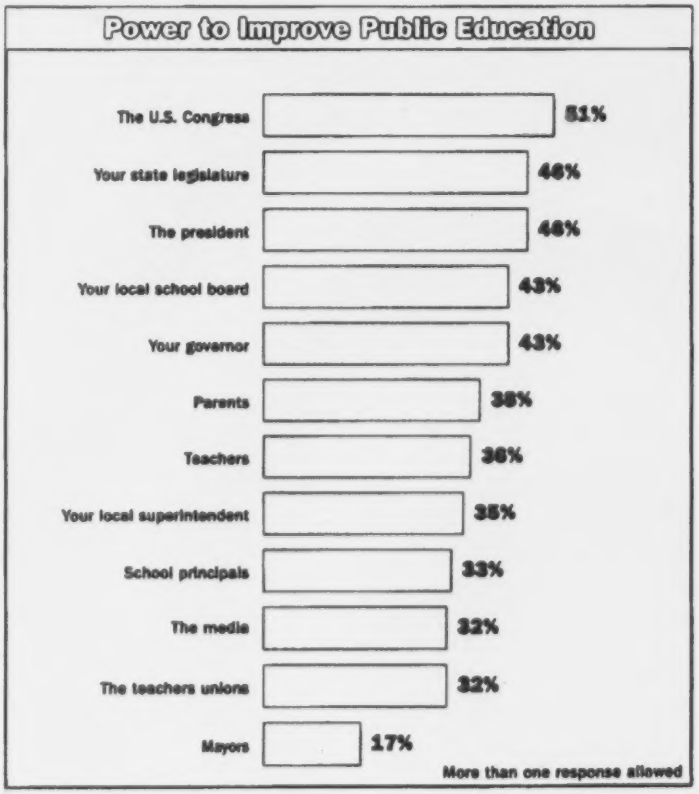
More than one response allowed

A majority of Americans rate the performance of local school boards as excellent or good (54%), and 51% rate local school superintendents this way. Governors come next with a 47% positive rating, and state legislatures get a 43% job approval rating on this score (roughly tied with parents). But the president only gets 40% good or excellent rating[15] and Congress 7 points less (at 33%, on a par with teachers unions at 35%). Mayors (29%) and the media (26%) bring up the rear.

Voter Impact

The political impact of these views at the national, state, and local levels is significant. Nearly 6 in 10 (58%) Americans said a candidate's position on education would be a very important influence on how they would vote in the upcoming elections (a figure that rose to two-thirds of all women surveyed, 3 in 4 Latinos, and 8 out of 10 blacks). Another third of the American public (34%) said it would be a somewhat important influence. Exactly how important an influence? We asked, "suppose a candidate is running for Congress in your district with whom you agree on most issues but whose stand on education you disagree with—would you vote for or against that candidate?" Significantly, nearly 6 in 10 (56%) of the American public said that they would vote against that candidate, including 62% of all women and 70% of Latinos.

Finally, we asked those we surveyed: "suppose a candidate is running for president with whom you agree on most of the issues, but whose stand on education you disagree with—would you vote for or against that candidate for president?" A majority (53%) say they would vote against a candidate based solely on his or her stand on education—with a higher percentage of women (58%) and Latinos (70%) indicating that a candidate's education positions would swing their vote.



[15] However, blacks and Latinos give the President higher marks, 69% and 56% respectively, providing a "good" or "excellent" rating on this measure.

Summing Up

Beneath the overall data, powerful trend lines point to issues that are still gathering momentum with the public—particularly among several key demographic groups who will play an increasingly significant role in elections to come (among them women, blacks, and Latinos). The public understands that when it comes to school reform, teachers are the heart of the matter. They know the stakes that poor educational performance pose for individuals in a knowledge-based society. Far from having given up on public education, the public is more determined than ever to make it work, to make it fair, and to pursue real solutions—not shortcuts, easy answers, or rhetorical chimeras.

"The public understands that when it comes to school reform, teachers are the heart of the matter."

American education *is* at a crossroads. We suspect the American people will soon grow tired of leaders, regardless of party affiliation, who fail to address in dramatic fashion the teacher quality challenge presented by these data and the demand for educational excellence and educational equality that they represent.

Recruiting New Teachers, Inc. National Survey On Teachers

1. I would like to read you some things that people have said are problems with public schools. After I read each one, please tell me how serious you think that problem is. Keep in mind that a problem may be serious, but a very serious problem means a problem is both serious and widespread. Would you say (ITEM) is very serious and widespread, somewhat serious, not too serious, or not at all serious?

1. Students' lack of basic skills
2. Student drug use
3. Student drinking
4. Teenage pregnancy
5. School violence
6. Lack of parental involvement
7. Lack of up-to-date technology/computers
8. Large classes
9. Poor-quality teachers

2. Please tell me how important you think each of the following measures is to lifting student achievement: very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not important at all?

1. The availability of high-quality textbooks and other instructional materials
2. A challenging curriculum—the subject matter that is taught
3. Ensuring that school buildings and facilities are in good condition
4. Student access to computers in school
5. Reduced class size
6. Ensuring a well-qualified teacher in every classroom
7. Greater parental involvement in children's education
8. Strict discipline in the classroom
9. Getting fully qualified principals who can effectively run their schools
10. Schools safe from violence
11. Promoting and graduating students solely based on standardized tests
12. Increasing the opportunities for teachers to undertake professional development to strengthen their teaching skills
13. Providing parents with the opportunity to choose which public school their child attends

3. If you had to choose only ONE of the following, which do you think has the greatest influence on student learning?

Establishing a system of academic standards required to be met by all students
Requiring achievement tests in core academic subjects
The quality of their teachers
Not sure

4. Now I want to ask you whether you agree strongly, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly that most children are capable of learning demanding academic subject matter?

Agree strongly
Agree somewhat
Disagree somewhat
Disagree strongly
Not all are capable but should meet same standards
Not sure

5. Based on your own experience, do you feel that student academic achievement is more strongly influenced by natural ability or hard work?

Natural ability
Hard work
Both equal
Not sure

6. Do you feel that having a highly qualified teacher who can help a child achieve his or her full learning potential is the most important element in education, a very important element, somewhat important, or a not very important element?

Most important element in education
Very important
Somewhat important
Not very important
Not sure

7. I want to read you some qualifications that some people feel are important for an excellent teacher to have. For each item, please tell me if you think that quality is very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not important at all.

1. A strong education in liberal arts subjects
2. Being thoroughly educated in the subjects they will teach
3. In-depth understanding of child/adolescent development
4. Being well-trained and knowledgeable about how to teach effectively
5. Having a master's degree from a nationally accredited school of education
6. Having at least a semester's experience in the classroom as a student teacher
7. The ability to communicate well with parents
8. Having a solid understanding of the community in which she/he will teach
9. Basic sensitivity to each child as an individual
10. Understanding how children learn
11. Knowing how to help students whose home language is not English to learn English
12. Knowing how to help students whose home language is not English learn demanding subjects
13. Commitment to staying current with developments in education and their teaching field
14. Knowing how to monitor and assess real student progress in learning
15. Knowing how to manage a classroom
16. Passing a teacher competency test

8. In your opinion, how important is it that (READ EACH ITEM)—very important, somewhat important, not very important, or not important at all?

Students have teachers from different ethnic or cultural backgrounds from their own

The racial composition of a school's staff reflect the ethnic makeup of its student body

9. Based on your experience and impression, how would you rate most teachers in the public schools where you live—highly qualified, well qualified, just minimally qualified, or unqualified?

Highly qualified
Well qualified
Just minimally qualified
Unqualified
Not sure

10. Based on your experience and impression, how would you rate most teachers in the nation—highly qualified, well qualified, just minimally qualified, or unqualified?

Highly qualified
Well qualified
Just minimally qualified
Unqualified
NA
Not sure

11. Would you favor or oppose lengthening the school year by two weeks to allow more time for teacher consultation and planning, with students having more study periods?

Favor
Oppose
Not sure

12. Now let me read you some additional statements about policies and practices that affect the teaching profession. Based on what you have heard or impressions you may have, tell me if you agree strongly with that statement, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly with each of these statements.

1. Standards for licensing a teacher in your state should be tied more closely to standards for student performance in their classes
2. Current teacher licensing standards in your state guarantee that teachers really know how to teach
3. Most colleges and universities that prepare teachers are doing a good job
4. Teacher education is a waste of time
5. Good teachers are born and not made
6. Teacher unions support setting high standards for teachers
7. Teacher unions too often stand in the way of real reform
8. Teachers should be paid according to how well their students perform on standardized tests of academic achievement
9. Teachers should be paid according to what they know and how well they perform on the job
10. Your local school district always hires fully qualified teachers
11. We should recognize and reward truly accomplished master teachers with higher pay
12. Too often, teacher unions stand in the way of removing incompetent teachers
13. Teacher unions are a major force for improving education

13. Let me ask you about teacher pay. Do you feel that most teachers in your community are overpaid, well paid, just adequately paid, or are inadequately paid?

Overpaid
Well paid
Just adequately paid
Inadequately paid
Not sure

14. In the nation as a whole, is it your impression that most teachers are overpaid, well paid, just adequately paid, or are inadequately paid?

Overpaid
Well paid
Just adequately paid
Inadequately paid
Not sure

15. The average salary for teachers with a four-year college degree is $8,000 less than for non-teachers with a similar four-year college degree. The average salary for a teacher with a master's graduate degree is $32,000 less than for others with a master's degree who do not teach for a living. Experts believe that in order to attract the ablest people to become teachers and to keep them in the classrooms, it will be necessary to pay teachers what others with a similar education are getting. This might require asking taxpayers to pay an increase in taxes to raise the level of teacher pay. Would you be willing or unwilling to pay $10 more in your yearly taxes to make sure that teachers are paid the same as others with a similar education?

Would be willing
Unwilling
Not sure

16. It is now estimated that we will need to hire two million teachers nationally over the next 10 years because of growing enrollments and teacher retirements. To staff our schools, would you favor or oppose?

1. The federal government providing loans to prospective teachers that would be "forgiven" on condition that the teacher teach in disadvantaged schools
2. Allowing people with bachelor's degrees to become teachers without requiring preparation in the field of education
3. Providing tax credits for teachers who work in high-poverty areas
4. Attracting more people currently working in other careers into teacher preparation
5. Lowering state requirements for the training needed to become a licensed teacher
6. Raising teacher salaries
7. Strengthening state requirements for becoming a licensed teacher
8. Establishing special programs for new teachers, in which able, veteran teachers would serve as mentors to newly hired teachers
9. Paying those who teach in critical subject areas such as science or math, or those who teach in inner cities, higher salaries than other teachers
10. Offering signing bonuses to qualified teachers who commit to teaching in a high-need area
11. Making it easier for teachers to transfer pension benefits and salary credit for experience when changing jobs between school districts and states
12. Eliminating the practice of hiring unqualified teachers
13. Recruiting qualified teachers from other countries

17. Right now, there is not a central place where people interested in teaching can find jobs anywhere in the country and where school districts can look nationwide to find qualified teachers. Do you favor or oppose establishing a central clearinghouse—a national teacher job bank—to make it easier to respond to the shortage of qualified teachers?

Favor
Oppose
Not sure

18. How widespread do you feel the problem of incompetent teachers is in public schools today?

Very widespread
Somewhat widespread
Not very widespread
Not a problem at all
Not sure

19. When a teacher is found to be incompetent to teach, do you think that teacher should be given more training and development to improve as a teacher, or should that teacher be removed?

Should be given more training and development
Should be removed
Not sure

20. Now, if a teacher is given more training and development to overcome incompetence in teaching, and if even after that training and development, within a reasonable period, the teacher is found to be incompetent to teach, do you then feel the teacher should be removed, or not?

Should be removed
Should not be removed
Not sure

21. Do you agree or disagree that parents should receive specific information on the qualifications of their child's teachers at the beginning of the school year?

Agree that information should be provided
Disagree
Not sure

22. Are you the parent or guardian of a child who attends pre-school, kindergarten, elementary school, middle school, junior high or high school, or not?

Yes
No
Not sure

23. Do your children attend a public school, an independent private school or a religious private school?

Public school
Independent private school
Private religious school
Home schooling
Both public and private
Both private and religious
Other

24. What is the grade of your oldest child—still in pre-school, elementary or secondary school?

Pre-school
Kindergarten
First grade
Second grade
Third grade
Fourth grade
Fifth grade
Sixth grade
Seventh grade
Eighth grade
Ninth grade
Tenth grade
Eleventh grade
Twelfth grade
Not Sure/Other

25. How knowledgeable do you feel your child's teachers are about the subjects they teach—very knowledgeable, only somewhat knowledgeable, not very knowledgeable, or hardly knowledgeable at all?

Very knowledgeable
Somewhat knowledgeable
Not very knowledgeable
Hardly knowledgeable at all
Not sure

26. How much do you feel your child's/children's teachers know how to help your child/children learn—a lot, some but not a lot, only a little, or hardly at all?

A lot
Some but not a lot
Only a little
Hardly at all
Not sure

27. Now let me read you a list of possible professions. (READ EACH ITEM ON THE LIST.) Now, if you had to choose, which one do you feel provides the most important benefit to society?

Lawyer
Accountant
Teacher
Business person
Journalist
Doctor (physician)
Nurse
Public official
None of them
Not sure

28. Again, if you had to choose, which ONE OR TWO of these careers would you recommend most highly for a member of your family?

Lawyer
Accountant
Teacher
Business person
Journalist
Doctor (physician)
Nurse
Public official
None of them
Not sure

29. Now let me ask you, suppose teachers were guaranteed an income of $60,000 a year. Would you then consider being a teacher yourself, or not?

Would consider teaching
Would not consider teaching
Not sure

30. And if a teacher were guaranteed an income of $60,000 a year, would you encourage a member of your family to consider a teaching a career, or not?

Would encourage
Would not encourage
Not sure

31. Now let me read you some statements people have made about teachers and education. Do you agree strongly, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly that (Item)?

1. In America the same educational opportunities are available to minority and non-minority children alike
2. In America the same educational opportunities are available to children who live in poor neighborhoods as those who live in affluent neighborhoods
3. The United States must give a much higher priority to kindergarten through high school education than is the case today
4. We should ensure that all children, including those who are economically disadvantaged, have teachers who are fully qualified, even if that means spending more money to achieve that goal
5. We must give a high national priority to recruiting and preparing teachers who can provide quality education for our children, especially those who are most in need to be helped to learn
6. We must give a high national priority to developing the professional skills and knowledge of teachers throughout their careers

32. Some people are proposing to allow parents to take the money the public education system provides for their child's education and use it to attend a private or parochial school of their choice. Let me ask you some questions about giving people vouchers, which would partially subsidize the cost of attending a private, religious, or parochial school of their choice. For each statement, tell me if you agree strongly, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly.

1. Giving people vouchers would be good, because it would create competitive pressure that would force public schools to improve
2. Giving people vouchers would be bad, because the amount of money given to parents wouldn't cover the full cost of private or parochial schools, so most parents couldn't afford to send their kids there
3. Giving people vouchers would be good, because they give parents choices they don't have now
4. Giving vouchers to people would be bad, because they will take money away from struggling public schools eroding the quality of education they offer
5. Giving vouchers to people would be good because some parents feel their children would get a better education in a religious or parochial school
6. Giving vouchers to people would be bad, because some parents would use them to send their children to religious or parochial schools, which would violate the constitutional separation of church and state in this country

33. Now, which of the following two choices do you favor more as the better way to make our schools what they ought to be?

Allowing parents to use public education money to send their children to a private or parochial school
Doing what it takes to put fully qualified teachers in every public school classroom in America
Not sure

34. A growing number of states and school districts allow outside organizations and groups to start new charter schools that would operate as part of the public school system, but would be free from much of its regulation and requirements. In some cases outside profit-making companies would run the charter schools. In other cases, groups of parents, teachers, or community-based organizations are granted such charters. Let me read you some statements about charter schools. Do you agree strongly, agree somewhat, disagree somewhat, or disagree strongly that (Item)?

1. Charter schools would be good because they can spur innovation and change in the public schools
2. Charter schools would be bad, because they lure away good teachers and good students from existing schools, eroding the quality of education for the majority of students remaining
3. Charter schools would be good because they give parents educational choices they don't have now for their children
4. Charter schools would be bad because they can only serve a small number of students, while diverting money and attention badly needed to improve the quality of education for a majority of students
5. Charter schools would be good, because they have fewer restrictions on who they can hire as teachers
6. Charter schools would be bad, because they can have unlicensed teachers who might not be qualified to teach

35. Now, if you had to choose, which of the following two choices do you favor more as the better way to make public schools what they should be?

Spending money to establish many more charter schools
Doing what it takes to get fully qualified teachers in every public school classroom
Not sure

36. Every state in America now guarantees that every child will have a free public education. Do you favor or oppose keeping that guarantee to a free public education?

Favor
Oppose
Not sure

37. Some critics have charged that the movement to give vouchers from public funds to parents to allow their children to attend religious or parochial schools not only could divert attention and much-needed money away from improving public education, but could ultimately result in weakening or even ending free public education for all children. Do you agree strongly with these charges, agree with them somewhat, disagree with them somewhat, or disagree with them strongly?

Agree strongly
Agree somewhat
Disagree somewhat
Disagree strongly
Not sure

38. When it comes to improving public education, do you feel (READ EACH ITEM) has a great deal of power to do that, some but not a lot of power, only a little power, or almost no power at all?

Your local school board
Your state legislature
Your governor
The U.S. Congress
The president
The teachers unions
Your local school superintendent
Parents
Teachers
The media
School principals
Mayors

39. When it comes to improving public education in America, how would you rate the performance of (READ EACH ITEM)—excellent, good, only fair, or poor?

Your local school board
Your state legislature
Your governor
The U.S. Congress
The president
The teachers unions
Your local school superintendent
Parents
Teachers
The media
School principals
Mayors

40. Let me ask you about some other suggestions that have been made to improve the public schools in America. For each, tell me if you strongly favor, favor somewhat, oppose somewhat, or strongly oppose that proposal.

1. Increase federal funding for construction of new public schools and modernization of older schools
2. Reduce federal spending to those states which have had a poor record of academic performance in their public schools for five years or more
3. Close down failing public schools and give help to students who are in them, such as relocating them in better schools
4. Eliminate most federal education programs, including Head Start and school lunch programs, and let the states determine how they spend federal school funds
5. Increase federal spending to states and school districts to hire new teachers and to reduce class size

41. Now, as you think about the upcoming elections in November, will a candidate's position on education be a very important, somewhat important, not very important, not at all important influence on your vote?

Very important influence
Somewhat important influence
Not very important influence
Not at all important influence
Not sure

42. Now, suppose a candidate is running for Congress in your district with whom you agree on most issues, but whose stand on education you disagree with—would you vote for or against that candidate?

Would vote for
Would vote against
Not sure

43. Finally, suppose a candidate is running for president with whom you agreed with on most of the issues, but whose stand on education you disagree with—would you vote for or against that candidate for president?

Would vote for
Would vote against
Not sure

Factuals

F1. Sex

Male
Female

F2. How old are you?

18-20
21-24
25-29
30-34
35-39
40-44
45-49
50-54
55-64
65-75
75+
Refused

F3. Is the head of this household presently single, married, widowed, divorced, separated, living with a partner, or have some other arrangement?

Single
Married
Divorced
Separated
Living with a partner
Some other arrangement
Widowed
Refused

F4. What was the last grade or level of school you completed?

Eighth grade or less
Some high school
High school graduate
Some college, junior college, community college
Four-year college graduate
Postgraduate degree

F5. Are you or have you ever been a teacher in grades from kindergarten through high school, or not?

Teaching now
Former teacher
Never been a teacher
Not sure

F6. Regardless of how you vote, do you consider yourself to be a Republican, Democrat, or an independent?

Republican
Democrat
Independent
Other
Don't/Can't vote
Not sure/Refused

F7. What is your religion?

Protestant
Catholics
Jewish
Other
No religion
Refused

F8. Do you consider yourself to be of Hispanic or Latino origin or not?

Yes
No
Not sure

F9. Do you consider yourself to be white, black or African-American, Asian, American Indian, racially mixed, or do you belong to some other race?

White
Black/African-American
Asian or Pacific Islander
American Indian, Native American, or Alaska Native
Racially mixed
Refused
Other

F10. Which of the following categories best describes your total 1999 household income? Was it?

$15,000 or less
$15,001-$25,000
$25,001-$35,000
$35,001-$50,000
$50,001-$75,000
$75,001-$100,000
$100,0001-$150,000
$150,000 and over
Refused

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